



Prescription Drugs Misuse

Morbidity and Mortality Related to Non-Illicit Narcotic Drug Misuse and Abuse

Indicator data clearly shows alarming trends in both the use and consequences of prescription narcotic drugs, signaling this issue as an important substance use issue to be addressed by the state. Utah has among the highest rates in the nation for past year non-medical use of pain reliever use.¹

Indicators of morbidity and mortality related to prescription narcotics misuse and abuse reveals a clear and alarming upward trend in the number of non-illicit drug deaths and overdoses since 1999. Figure 1 presents medical examiner death data illustrating this mortality trend through 2007.²

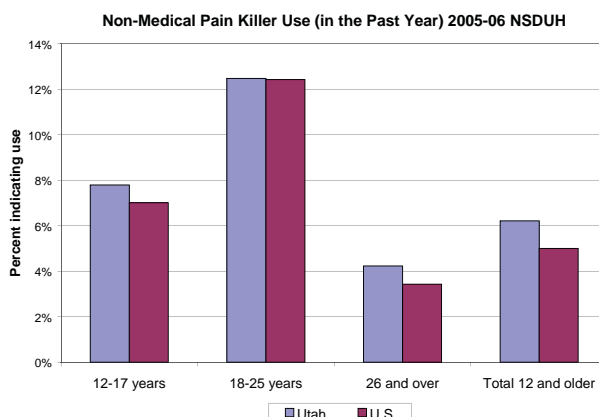
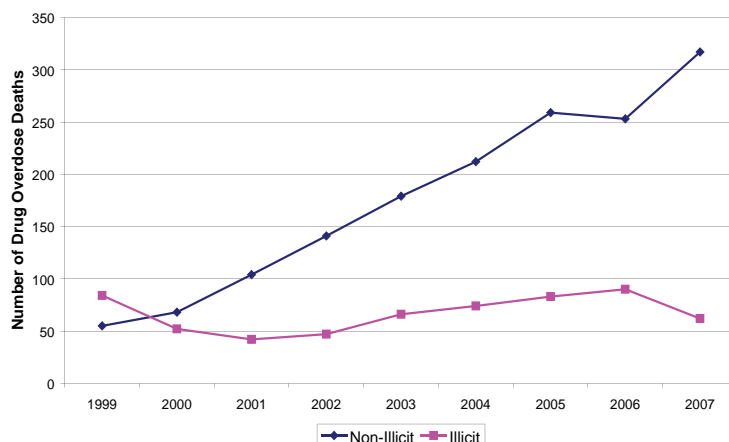


Figure 1. Number of Accidental/Undetermined Intent Drug Overdose Deaths by Drug Category and Year - Utah 1999-2007



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Quick Facts

- Estimates of the non-medical pain killer use among Utahns age 12 and older exceeded the national estimates in each of the past three years (2004-06).²
- Since 2000, non-illicit drugs such as oxycodone, fentanyl and methadone contribute more to overdose fatalities in Utah than illicit drugs such as heroin.¹
- According to death certificate data, the number of unintentional drug poisoning deaths has jumped from 167 in 1999 to 448 in 2007. The majority of these deaths were related to narcotics drugs.³
- Emergency room encounters for methadone and narcotic drugs other than heroin more than doubled between 1999 and 2005 (from 297 cases to 802).³

¹ According to the National Survey of Drug Use and Health

² Medical Examiner data collected by the Utah Department of Health for the Prescription Pain Medication Management and Education Program, June 2008

³ Data obtained through the Utah Indicator Based Information System (IBIS) for Public Health